United Nations E/CN.5/2003/NGO/13

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
8 January 2003

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-first session
10-21 February 2003
Item 3 (b) (iv) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups: modalities for review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

Statement submitted by the American Association of Retired Persons, the International Federation on Ageing and Soroptomist International, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants, the International Longevity Center and the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; and the International Association of the Third Age Universities and the World Union for Progressive Judaism, non-governmental organizations on the Roster of the Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

* * *

* E/CN.5/2003/1.

03-20854 (E) 240103

A call to action

Introduction

We commend the States Members of the United Nations for convening the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid in April 2002, and for the subsequent adoption of a new international plan of action on ageing and Political Declaration[1] that accompanies it. We are also pleased to note the successful regional follow-up meetings, each with a strategy for furthering the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.[2]

The International Federation on Ageing, with the support of the NGO Committee on Ageing in New York, representing more than 50 non-governmental organizations, views the Plan as a valuable blueprint to guide the development of national policies for at least the next decade. However, we are concerned that unless a clear, systematic and accepted process for reviewing progress towards the implementation of the Plan is in place, achieving the fundamental goals of the Second World Assembly on Ageing is in jeopardy.

Implementation

In support of the implementation section of the International Plan of Action, 2002,[3] we call on the Member States participating in the forty-first session of the Commission for Social Development to constructively respond to the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing,[4] particularly taking into account subparagraphs (d), (c) and (b). In those respective subparagraphs, the Secretary-General calls for the strengthening of the programme on ageing of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs; for a United Nations system-wide strengthening of focal points on ageing in its functional commissions and specialized agencies, with the programme on ageing serving as coordinator; and for the programme on ageing, through extensive consultations with civil society, academia and organs of the United Nations, to prepare a road map for implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002. The NGO Committee on Ageing urges that these structural elements, along with their financial and staffing requirements, be clearly defined and approved during the present session of the Commission in order for implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action to move forward on a timely basis.

Additionally, we ask the Commission for Social Development to address the mandate given to it by the Second World Assembly in the final paragraph of the 2002 Plan.[5] Paragraph 132 specifically delegates to the Commission the responsibility "for follow-up and appraisal of the implementation of the International Plan ...". Moreover, the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing[6] states:

> "The Commission for Social Development, as the entity responsible for follow-up and appraisal of the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, should commence discussion on how to integrate the different dimensions of population ageing in its work ... and the modalities of reviews and appraisals at its forty-first session in 2003 ..."

The NGO Committee on Ageing calls upon the Commission to take in hand the tasks involved to fulfil its obligation to implement these action items from the Second World Assembly on Ageing.

Monitoring and follow-up

At this moment, there is no description or outline for a strong follow-up and an effective monitoring process. For us, an effective implementation strategy requires the commitment of an adequately organized and continuous follow-up process with strong elements of monitoring, with systematic assessment and fair evaluation of progress achieved. Part of the follow-up process is regional cooperation, along with the participation of non-governmental organizations, academia, the private sector and older persons themselves. The process of monitoring has to be structured, participative and transparent. It needs to involve all relevant actors at every stage in order to benefit from their resources and their expertise. Monitoring is in itself part of the implementation mechanism as it stimulates all parties concerned to continuously and effectively implement their share in the plan of action and holds them at the same time accountable for what they do and how they do it.

In particular, monitoring will fulfil the following aims:

- **Measure** United Nations system-wide implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, in its agenda
- **Enable** Member States to identify accurately those areas where they can benefit most from mutual support and exchange
- **Provide** age- and gender-disaggregated data gathering, across regions, to provide better evidence to underpin policy-making and stimulate further research
- **Pinpoint and highlight** successful policies and strategies, and provide robust explanations of why policies are effective and how particular outcomes have been achieved

It is also important that monitoring recognize the different points of departure, the various cultures and the available means of each of the countries. Thus, it should promote and measure progress achieved. At the same time, monitoring should provide quality data analysis and assessment, leading to additional knowledge and the identification of best practices in order to initiate and support sound and sustainable policy-making.

More specifically, we propose that, in collaboration with all interested parties, an evaluative method or "report card" on progress towards achieving the over 180 action items in the Plan be developed and administered on a regular basis by Governments, with the participation of civil society and the possibility of a shadow report by non-governmental organizations. For example, two evaluative items might be adapted as follows from paragraphs 48 (a) and 67 (c) of the Plan:

Objective: reduction of **poverty** among older persons

Item to be measured: reduce the proportion of persons living in **extreme poverty** by one half by 2015

Objective: development of policies to **prevent ill-health** among older persons

Item to be measured: ensure that **gender-specific primary prevention** and screening programmes are available and affordable to older persons

Conclusion

Reflecting on the summary found in the opening page of the Secretary-General's report, we call on this session of the Commission to "exercise its responsibility for follow-up and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action". We believe that by undertaking this task, the Commission will support the priority theme for the Commission, "National and international cooperation for social development", as well as addressing the following subtopics: sharing of experiences and practices in social development; social responsibility of the private sector; and impact of employment strategies on social development. The issue of older persons is a clear and major element in each of these topics and therefore must be incorporated in each of the Commission's decisions.

Notes

[1] A/CONF.197/9, chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

[2] Ibid., annex II.

[3] Ibid.

[4] A/57/93, para. 33.

[5] A/CONF.197/9, chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[6] A/57/93, para. 33 (a).